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CMP's controversial hydropower project passes second regulatory hurdle
Bangor Daily News | 01/08/2020
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Central Maine Power Co. received a second key approval from regulators Wednesday for its proposed hydropower project when the Maine Land Use Planning Commission voted 5 to 2 to grant it a land-use certification.

The decision is one in a series of approvals needed from municipal, state and federal governments for the \$1 billion project. Gov. Janet Mills supports the project, which CMP has said will employ 1,600 people at the height of construction and be a boon to the state's economy. But opposition remains strong over potential environmental harm and questions over the project's value to Mainers.

The approval followed last April's ruling by the Maine Public Utilities Commission to grant its permit for the \$1 billion project. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection is the next regulator to review the project.

The vote Wednesday approved a draft recommendation by commission staff issued on Dec. 31. Two commissioners, Bill Gilmore and Millard Billings, voted against the measure, while Gwen Hilton recused herself. The commission needs five votes to pass or deny any request.

Voting in favor were commissioners Peter Pray, Durward Humphrey, Everett Worcester, Betsy Fitzgerald and James May.

Despite the approval, some commissioners still had mixed feelings about the CMP project. Commissioner May voted yes, but said if the decision had been based on emotions rather than submitted documents and testimony, he would have voted against it.